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SUBJECT: IMPORT SAFETY IN THAILAND

REFTEL: STATE 114788

¶1. In response to reftel, Agriculture Attache and Econoff discussed product safety with contacts at the National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity and Food Standards in the Ministry of Agriculture, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Customs Department. Import and export safety in Thailand focuses primarily on food and pharmaceutical products and significantly less so on other consumer products.

Food safety

¶2. In recent years, Thailand has worked to strengthen food safety controls and management systems by implementing and enforcing risk analysis in national food safety control systems throughout the entire food chain (from farm to table). Since 2004, the National Food Safety Program (NFSP) has been the primary mechanism for food safety, comprised of inspection and certification by authorities from various agencies. The Royal Thai Government (RTG) has worked closely with international agencies such as the World Health Organization and Food and Agriculture Organization, and food industries (Processed Foods Export Association, Thai Broiler Association) in development of the NFSP. Typically, the RTG works closely with regulatory authorities in its export markets to develop the necessary food safety requirements.

¶3. Under the NFSP, Thailand has developed a food control system including basic traceability to ensure the safety of imported and exported food and agricultural products. Exported products must meet requirements under domestic certification systems, such as GAP (Good Agricultural Practices), GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices), and HACCP (Hazard Critical Control Point). At the farm level, these systems are controlled by the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (Department of Agriculture, Department of Fisheries and Department of Livestock Development). For slaughter-house control, the organization directly responsible is the Department of Livestock Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives. The Ministry of Interior plays a cooperative role with the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives to oversee such functions as building design for processing facilities.

¶4. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Provincial Public Health Offices of the Ministry of Public Health, with the support of the food analytical services of the Department of Medical Sciences, and of accredited laboratories, are responsible for the safety of food ingredients used in processed foods and residue levels.

¶5. The Department of Health works cooperatively with the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) at the food distribution level (fresh markets, supermarkets, street food vendors and restaurants) to control food quality, food hygiene and food safety distributed throughout the country.
¶6. At the port level, staff from all relevant agencies are present to inspect imported products. Imported product which does not meet domestic standards or requirements is not permitted to enter the

country.

¶7. Recently, the Department of Medical Sciences and the FDA conducted tests on 11,500 food items. A number of Chinese fruit and vegetable products were blacklisted after discovery of high levels of pesticide residues. However, RTG officials maintain they are not imposing additional verification and surveillance systems but have increased sampling rates.

Pharmaceuticals

¶8. The RTG requires licensing of companies to produce, sell or import any pharmaceutical into Thailand, and the registration of individual products. Licensing is under the authority of the Drug Control Division of the Ministry of Public Health in the Bangkok metropolitan area and Provincial Health Offices outside the metropolitan area.

¶9. Following the registration of pharmaceuticals, the RTG's quality control system focuses on output, i.e. the last stage of the production process, rather than input/raw materials or in the actual production process itself. In the post-marketing phase, pharmaceutical quality monitoring is conducted by regular inspection and pharmaceutical sampling through the National Adverse Drug Reactions Monitoring Center and its nineteen regional offices.

¶10. In December 2006, the FDA requested the cooperation of major importers of active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) to report and register the country of origin of all imported API via E-submission. Importers are now required to submit a "Certificate of Analysis" of the active ingredients to the FDA. The FDA then issues unique 15-digit numbers to importers to be included on all import shipments.
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